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ABSTRACT

A study identified the competencies needed by and the inservice problems of vocational teachers involved in teaching disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms. During the study, each of the 100 vocational education teachers instructing disadvantaged learners in state/federally funded self-contained programs for the disadvantaged in Virginia were surveyed in order to ascertain the competencies that they perceived to be essential for being a successful teacher of disadvantaged learners. In addition, these same teachers were asked to identify the major problem areas that they encountered in working with disadvantaged youth. Eighty-five of the 100 teachers completed a vocational education special needs scale that covered 25 competency areas related to teaching disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms. Included among those competencies that were perceived to be most important to teaching disadvantaged students were the ability to deal with students emotionally, academically, culturally, and socially; the ability to create a tension-free classroom atmosphere; and the acquisition of extensive knowledge of subject matter. The greatest need for inservice training was identified in the following instructional and program areas: the ability to design an individualized education program, knowledge of students' background and way of life, and knowledge of students' learning styles. Recommendations called for organizing a comprehensive personnel development program for the state's teachers. (MN)

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COMPETENCIES NEEDED AND IN-SERVICE PROBLEMS OF VOCATIONAL TEACHERS TEACHING THE DISADVANTAGED IN SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study reports on the perceptions of a population of vocational teachers who work with disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms. The study was designed to examine teaching problems and those teaching competencies teachers perceived as being important in working with the disadvantaged in self-contained classroom situations.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of training vocational teachers to teach disadvantaged and other special needs students is both critically important and complex. It is critical because the effectiveness of vocational education for special needs populations depends upon the performance of teachers in working with special needs learners, or more specifically, disadvantaged learners. It is crucial, too, because although training opportunties are provided by state departments, universities, federal and private agencies, to name a few, such training programs are usually conducted without adequate need analysis, consideration of relationship to past training or to training activities which might be conducted in the future.

It is a complex problem for several reasons: 1) currently, there are no universal special certification requirements for teaching disadvantaged/special needs learners enrolled in vocational education programs. Thusly, too many vocational teachers are employed to teach disadvantaged learners with little or no professional background for teaching these students, 2) the educational needs and problems of vocational teachers working with the disadvantaged are diverse, and they vary according to the geographical area of the state and characteristics of the local situation; and 3) to reach a large number of these teachers with maximum impact, optional delivery systems of education services are required. University credit courses and short-term in-service training institutes and workshops are widely used models, but these are not the only models of effective delivery systems.

What is clearly required is a more adequate way to identify the real educational needs of vocational teachers providing instruction to disadvantaged students, especially in self-contained classrooms.

A combination of two approaches seem to be a feasible way to identify the real educational needs of teachers. One approach is to assess the competencies of teachers according to a competency model; programs could then be organized to raise the competency level of teachers who fall short of the required levels of performance. The competency model approach provides a set of clearly stated competencies, which can be used by teachers, supervisors, and state department personnel.

A second approach which also derives information from teachers themselves calls for teachers to identify problems which they experience in their work.

Both approaches are needed. A competency model provides a standard of behaviors; problem identification provides data about the actual situation in which teachers are involved.

Statement of the Problem

The central concern of this investigation was the identification of problems encountered and competencies needed by vocational/technical education teachers providing instruction to disadvantaged students in self-contained classes. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1) What are the problems confronting teachers in their work with disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms?
2) Which competencies are perceived by vocational teachers as being important in order to function effectively with disadvantaged students?
3) Which competency areas constitute the greatest need for in-service training as perceived by vocational teachers who work with disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms?

Significance of the Study

This study was to provide information for planning in-servcie educational programs for vocational teachers teaching disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms in Virginia. In the absence of such information, in-service education cannot be directed toward meeting real educational needs. The study yielded three kinds of information useful to planning. First, the self-perceived competency was identified. Second, problem areas were identified. Third, needs according to specific socio-demographic variables were identified.

A second significance was the development and testing of a competency model for special needs vocational teachers. The instrument can then be used to conduct future state surveys or used in particular regions or school districts to identify educational needs or used by individual teachers as the basis for self-directed study.

A third significance was the identification of problem areas. The problem which teachers identified with were of two kinds: instrumental and educational. Instrumental problems were those which pertained to how organizations operate, these can only be corrected by administrative actions. Educational problems were those which pertained to a lack of deficiency of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes.

Information provided by this study should be useful both in revising the present vocational teacher education programs and in designing more appropriate in-service education for teachers of vocational/technical education working with the disadvantaged, especially in self-contained classroom situations.

Objectives of the Study

The study had as it's objectives the following:

A. To identify and examine critically the in-service needs and problems of teachers teaching the disadvantaged in self-contained classes.

B. To identify competencies vocational/technical education personnel perceived as being critical in working with disadvantaged students in self-contained classes.

C. To determine the teaching techniques, resource persons, and/or curriculum materials that are most helpful, as perceived by vocational/technical education personnel, when teaching the disadvantaged in self-contained classes.

Limitations of the Study

In a study of this nature there are usually several inherent limitations. These included:

1. The restrictions of the competency/problem approach in yielding valid and useful information for planning pre-service and in-service programs.
2. The accuracy of the information reported via the competency rating scale.
3. Data collection from only vocational teachers teaching disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms.

Review of Literature

When the disadvantaged student became a topic of considerable discussion in the 1960's, many of the writers of that period including Green, 1976; Morrison and Ray, 1968; Clifford, 1974; Passon, 1976; Whitten, 1970; and Hutton, 1970, expressed great concern over the lack of effective teacher preparation to provide meaningful, realistic and positive instruction to culturally, socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged students. Similarly, as reported by Feck, 1972; Ferguson, 1972; and Sheppard, 1975, the need still exists to identify and incorporate into both pre-service and in-service training, pedagogical competencies that meet the needs of vocational educators who teach disadvantaged youth in self-contained classrooms. Consistent with the identification of necessary competencies to teach disadvantaged youth is documentation of problems directly or indirectly related to the competencies too many vocational teachers simpy have not yet acquired. Specifically, Feck (1972) found in a study focusing on research and programs pertaining to teaching disadvantaged and handicapped that thirty of thirty-five respondents felt that the most necessary competency for teachers to have was the ability to diagnose learning problems and needs of the disadvantaged and/or handicapped youth. Twenty-one felt that a knowledge of the characteristics of the disadvantaged and handicapped was second in importance. In the same study vocational teachers felt that on a day-to-day basis, the greatest problem thay encountered was that of motivating the disadvantaged and/or handicapped; the next problem they listed was lack of time. Closely related to Feck's findings, Sheppard (1975) in surveying the opinions of vocational teachers teaching both disadvantaged and handicapped students in regular vocational programs (representing all the service areas)

found that thirteen of sixteen teaching competencies were rated very important and that the salient problems identified on a day-to-day basis were: 1) students' lack of motivation, 2) students' poor attendance, 3) students' personal problems, 4) lack of appropriate instructional materials, and 5) the inability of regular textbook materials to reach each student.

This brief literature review revealed with little doubt the great need for research in the area of what actually happens in the classroom as well as the need to examine what teachers themselves believe make them successful when they function in classroom situations with disadvantaged students. The findings of the study contained in this paper attempted to provide data to be used as the basis or framework for a sound pre-service or in-service teacher education program for vocational/technical education teachers.

Methodology

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of all vocational teachers teaching disadvantaged learners in self-contained reimburseable programs for the disadvantaged funded by P.L. 94-482 (Vocational Amendments of 1976) and administered by the State Board for Vocational Education. Since the entire collection of elements (vocational teachers) were accessible to the investigator, all vocational teachers teaching disadvantaged youth in state/federally funded self-contained vocational classes were contacted (N = 100).

Note: Self-contained vocational classes refers to classes composed primarily of students with the same learner characteristics and limited to 15 students per class period.

Eighty-five percent of the vocational techers returned the competency rating scale. Males outnumbered females by 14%; whites constituted 68% of the respondents; blacks 31%, and the remaining one percent failed to check the category of race. As expected, a significantly large number of respondents (97%) are full-time teachers and years of teaching experience range from one to thirty-three with approximately one-third of all respondents having taught for only one to five years. This suggests that many vocational teachers providing instruction to disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms are quite inexperienced and thus strengthens the need for greater in-service activities keyed to an understanding of the competencies and skills required to be a successful teacher of the disadvantaged. To further emphasize this point it is even more pronounced when one examines years of teaching vocational special needs where a large number (44%) of the respondents have only three years of teaching special needs of disadvantaged students in vocational and technical education programs.

As far as work location is concerned, the respondents seem to show a balance among rural, suburban and urban school systems, however, a larger plurality of those responding work in an urban area. No specific definition of the terms urban, rural, and suburban were given, thus the responses represent the respondents' opinions about their work locales.

Design of Study and Instrumentation

This study, which best fits the descriptive-survey methodological approach to provide answers to questions, was designed so that vocational teachers could rate competency statements they perceived to be essential to being a successful teacher of disadvantaged learners. Additionally,

these teachers, at the same time, could also identify the major problem areas encountered by them in working with disadvantaged youth which have implications for in-service training.

The major task in this part of the study was the identification of competencies believed necessary for effective instruction of disadvantaged students. Identification of these competencies was made by the investigator through an extensive search of the literature and empirical findings of other researchers. From this effort evolved what was termed the Vocational Education Special Needs Scale. The scale consists of 25 competency statements of areas related to teaching disadvantaged students, specifically in self-contained classrooms. Teachers were asked to rate the importance of each competency statement (insofar as that competency is perceived as being critical in order to be a successful teacher of the disadvantaged. (1 = no importance; 2 = little importance; 3 = some importance; 4 = important, and 5 = very important). Also, the competency rating scale contained a scale which allowed vocational education teachers to rank each competency statement relative to their perceived need for in-service training. (1 = no need; 2 = little need; 3 = some need; 4 = moderate need, and 5 = great need). This was done to establish, to the extent possible, some in-service priorities for vocational teachers in the commonwelath. In addition, it was suspected that in some instances teachers would rate certain competencies very high (necessary to possess skills relative to being an effective teacher) but would not necessarily see such competency as a high priority in-service training need.

The competency rating scale was administered to the population of approximately 100 vocational teachers teaching disadvantaged students in the state supported self-contained disadvantaged programs.

Reliability

The competency rating scale was tested for clarity and ambiguity using graduate students in vocational and technical education at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Northern Virginia Graduate Center. From the comments of these graduate students, ambiguous and unclear items were reworded or eliminated. The results of the scoring of the instrument with the graduate students were also used to eliminate all items with a low item-test correlation (all items with lower then a 0.30 item-test correlation were eliminated). A 32 item instrument resulted from these eliminations.

Following the initial testing of the instrument with graduate students in vocational and technical education, the instrument was tested for reliability with vocational teachers who teach disadvantaged students in regular vocational programs in the commonwealth of Virginia. A total of 57 teachers completed the competency rating scale. A measure of internal consistency using the Kuder-Richardson (KR) 20 formula was found to be 0.748.

Validity

Several efforts were made to ensure that a valid instrument (competency rating scale) was used in the collection of data.

1. A review of the literature aided from a content validity view supports the inclusion of competencies held by veteran teachers of disadvantaged students as being valid competencies to be an

effective teacher of disadvantaged students.

2. A panel of regular vocational teachers who teach disadvantaged students assisted in the construct validity of the instrument by examining underlying pedagogical aspects of teaching behavior in relation to working with disadvantaged students in the classroom.
3. Observations made during the pilot-testing by the investigator suggested that the instrument was actually measuring those competencies clearly needed for vocational teachers to be successful in providing instruction to disadvantaged learners.
4. Face validity checks were ascertained by simply asking vocational teachers in the pilot study who had five or more years of teaching experience to examine the list of competencies and indicate their agreement or disagreement as to whether the competency items are valid for teaching disadvantaged students.

Statistical Analysis and Treatment of Data

Since the entire population of vocational teachers teaching disadvantaged students in self-contained vocational classes, was examined, descriptive statistics were used to to describe the characteristics of the vocational teachers from which the data were collected. The use of descriptive statistics allows users of the results, at their discretion, to possibly infer the results to other comparable groups. In short, any inferences from the findings of this study are based upon judgment or logical reasoning and not statistical significance. Specifically, frequency distributions and percentages were used in reporting the collected data.

Results

The results of the study are presented in correspondence to the questions to follow, including the study's three basic research questions.

1. What competencies are perceived by vocational teacners as being important relative to teaching disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms?

The data collected show that vocational teachers felt that "knowledge of learning styles of students", "the ability to deal with students emotionally, academically, culturally and socially different," "the ability to create a tension-free classroom atmoshphere," "extensive knowledge of subject matter," knowledge of teaching-learning techniques appropriate for special needs learners "and "knowledge of how to enhance the development of perceptual processes (visual and auditory discrimination, fluency in speaking, reading, writing, aesthetic expression) "were the critical competencies needed to effectively teach the disadvantaged.

2. What are the problems confronting teachers in their work with disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms?

In response to the above question, vocational teachers felt their greatest problems on a day-to-day basis in teaching the disadvantaged include lack of curriculum materials, lack of knowledgeable resource persons, lack of suitable facilities/equipment, lack of adequate funding for the program, apathy and/or ignorance on the part of school administrators, motivating students, securing jobs for students in the current tight job market and getting students to recognize the value of learning.

3. Which competency areas constitute the greatest need for in-service training as perceived by vocational teachers?

The greatest need for in-service training (based upon lack of competency) was identified in the following instructional and/or program areas:

"ability to relate learning to student experiences and past learning"; "ability to design an individual educational program (IEP) for students based on results of diagnostic tests";'knowledge of students' background and their way of life";'knowledge of learning styles of students";'ability to deal with students emotionally, academcally, culturally and socially different";'knowledge of teaching-learning techniques appropriate for disadvantaged learners"; and 'knowledge of a variety of ways to motivate disadvantaged learners". (Tables 1, 2 & 3 show responses of vocational teachers to three competency areas in relation to need for in-service training.)

4. How do vocational teachers perceive the importance of competencies in teaching disadvantaged learners in relation to the number of years having taught disadvantaged students?

In the study, vocational teachers viewed differently competencies needed in accordance with the length of time engaged in teaching disadvantaged students. Meaningful relations to years teaching the disadvantaged included "ability to create a tension-free classroom atmosphere";"extensive knowledge of subject matter";knowledge of teaching-learning techniques appropriate for disadvantaged learners";and"knoweldge of how to enhance the development of perceptual processes (visual and aduitory discriminiation, fluency in speaking, reading writing, aesthetic expression)".

5. How do vocational teachers perceive the need for in-service training in relation to racial/ethnic identity in teaching disadvantaged students?

Table 4 shows three of the competencies which had meaningful importance based upon the racial/ethnic identify of vocational teachers in relation to need for in-service training. The remaining seven competencies identified were "knowledge of students' background and their way of life;" "knowledge of learning styles of students;" "extensive knowledge of teacher-learning techniques;"

Table 1

Relationshop Between Compentency-Abílity to Diagnose and Assess Learning Problems of Disadvantaged Students - And Need for In-Service Training (n = 85)

Importance of competency in teaching the disadvantaged	Need for in-service training						
	Blank	None	Little	Some	Moderate	Great	Total
Blank	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Little importance	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Some importance	0	0	3	6	0	2	11
Important	1	2	0	11	13	4	31
Very important	1	0	0	3	13	23	40
TOTAL	4	2	4	20	26	29	85

Table 2

Relationship Between Competency - Knowledge of Teaching - Learning Techniques Appropriate for Special Needs Learners - And Need For In-Service Training (n = 85)

Importance of Competecny in Teaching the Disadvataged	Need for in-service training					
	Blank	None	Some	Moderate	Great	Total
Blank	1	0	0	0	0	1
No Importance	1	0	0	0	0	1
Some Importance	0	0	4	0	0	4
Important	0	1	11	10	2	24
Very Important	0	1	2	16	36	55
Total	2	2	17	26	38	85

Table 3

Relationship Between Competency - Ability to Deal with Students Emotionally, Academically, Culturally, and Socially Different - and Need for In-Service Training (n= 85)

Importance of Competency in Teaching the Disadvantaged	Need for in-service training						
	Blank	None	Little	Some	Moderate	Great	Total
Blank	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Some Importance	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Important	2	2	3	7	7	1	22
Very Important	0	1	2	12	10	34	59
Total	3	3	5	22	17	35	85

Table 4

Teachers' Response to Competency Statements in Relation To Need For In-Service Training According to Race

(N = 85)

Ability to involve every learner in active rather than passive participation.

Need for In-service Training	Race			
	Black	Caucasian	Other	Total
Blank	0	2	0	2
No need	1	5	0	6
Little need	0	4		4
Some need	2	23	0	25
Moderate need	5	17	0	22
Great need	18	7	1	26
TOTAL	26	58	1	85

Ability to relate learning to student experiences and past learning.

Need for In-service Training	Race			
	Black	Caucasian	Other	Total
Blank	0	3	0	3
No need	0	6	0	6
Little need	1	9	0	10
Some need	3	21	0	24
Moderate need	11	16	1	28
Great need	11	3	0	14
TOTAL	26	58	1	85

Knowledge of teaching-learning techniques appropriate for disadvantaged learners.

Need for In-service Training	Race			
	Black	Caucasian	Other	Total
Blank	0	2	0	2
No need	0	2	0	2
Some need	1	15	1	17
Moderate need	3	23	0	26
Great need	22	16	0	36
TOTAL	26	58	1	85

"Ability to communicate effectively with students;" "ability to negotiate interpersonal relationships with students' parents, relatives, or guardians concerning his/her progress in the classroom;" and "knowledge of how to enhance the development of perceptual processes (visual and auditory discrimination, fluency in speaking, reading, writing, aesthetic expression)."

6. How do vocational teachers perceive the need for in-service training in specific competency areas in relation to work location (urban, rural and suburban)?

There was evidence of a meaningful relationship between teachers' perceptions of need for in-service training and work location. Those competency areas identified for in-service training included: "ability to develop a plan of instruction that demonstrates appropriate sequence, "continuity and integration of subject matter;" "ability to manage disciplinary problems and/or classroom disruptions;" "knowledge of literature dealing with minority dialect or language differences;" "ability to establish a rapport with students' parents, relatives or guardians concerning his/her progress in the classroom;" and "knowledge of how to enhance the developmental processes (visual and auditory discrimination, fleuncy in speaking, reading, writing, and aesthetic expression)."

Other Results

Successful teaching techniques/methods/resources currently being utilized by teachers in working with disadvantaged students.

Of the teaching techniques which teachers found to be most helpful, hands-on activities and experiences ranked highest, followed by individualized learning instruction and small group activities/informal discussions.

Approximately two-thirds of all teachers indentified parents and guest speakers representing various career fields as the most helpful resource persons. Note: No State Department, district/regional or local level vocational personnel were cited as helpful resources.

Helpful Curriculum Materials

Vocational teachers identified teacher designed and prepared materials used in conjunction with state curriculum guides and materials from universities as being the most helpful followed by workbooks, manuals, magazines, newspapers, and outside agency materials.

Preparatory Learning Experiences

Vocational teachers cited several informal learning experiences that help in their preparation to teach disadvantaged students including personal involvement or "rapping" with students and through home visitations. Vocational teachers cited also experience in special government-sponsored programs such as Peace Corps, VISTA, and Title I of ESEA as being helpful; additionally, the reading of books, professional journals, pamphlets, and other relevant materials were cited as helpful to their preparation to teach disadvantaged learners.

Like Best About Teaching the Disadvantaged

Vocational teachers cited positive changes in students' attitude and performance, seeing students succeed, the opportunity to work with students on an individual basis at their own pace, challenging and interesting work, and feeling needed as some of the reasons for teaching disadvantaged students.

Like Least About Teaching the Disadvantaged

Some of the least appealing things about teaching disadvantaged students include classroom management/discipline problems, lack of time to individualize as much as needed/desired, poor facilities, lack of parental interest, support and cooperation, being looked upon as a "baby-sitter" rather than a teacher by colleagues, feeling of inadequacy stemming from a lack of knowledge regarding special needs, I.E.P. development and dealing with motivational problems.

Teachers' Perception of Role of State Department of Education

Vocational teachers, in general, perceived the State Department of Education, Division of Vocational and Adult Education role to be that of providing instructional materials, the dissemination of up-to-date information including legislation which affects special needs students, allocating more monies earmarked for disadvantaged students, providing greater stimulation of teacher morale and motivation, conducting needs assessments to determine teachers' in-service needs and sponsor statewide/regional conferences, seminars or workshops on working with disadvantaged students.

Teachers' Perception of Role of Institutions of Higher Education

Vocational teachers perceived the role of institutions of higher education insofar as enhancing their effectiveness in teaching disadvantaged learners as that of offering approporiate courses or workshops on pertinent topics, (e.g., methods of teaching, trends in curriculum development, mainstreaming). They believe also that these institutions should acquire more relevant reference materials for their libraries, modify teacher program/certification requirements to inlcude at least one course addressing disadvantaged students, and provide internship experiences in working with special needs students as part of the teacher training program.

Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion and Conclusions

The results indicated that practically every teacher agreed that the competencies identified in the study are, in fact, very important to their efforts to reach and teach disadvantaged students in vocational classes. However, no discernible differences could be noted, based on previous studies by the investigator and others in the field, between competencies needed to

function more effectively in self-contained classrooms in contrast to teaching these same students in integrated or mainstreamed classrooms. The same appears true of the need for in-service training, that is, while one classroom environment might suggest different needs for in-service training, the differences, if they exist, do not appear to be meaningful.

Other conclusions drawn from the findings included:

- The rated competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) can provide a set of priorities for establishing criteria for curriculum planning in training vocational teachers to teach disadvantaged students.
- The major in-service needs of vocational teachers in self-contained classes seem to be centered around principles of learning as they apply to the disadvantaged learner as well as developing an individualized educational program to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. In addition, vocational teachers are having problems finding appropriate teaching techniques, motivational tactics which work, assessing learning problems and understanding the cultural background and way of life of the academically, socially and economically disadvantaged student.
- Vocational teachers, in general, have limited informal and formal experiences to prepare them to work with disadvantaged students.
- Teachers having taught only one to five years in-service needs tend to be more in the areas of classroom management (discipline), learning problems of students and appropriate teaching methods. Conversely, more experienced vocational teachers (those with five or more years) greatest in-service needs lie in the areas of subject matter competency, enhancing the development of perceptual processes of disadvantaged learners (visual and auditory discrimination, fluency in speaking, reading, writing, etc.) and working effectively with fellow colleagues and vocational administrators especially in sharing of personal learning needs of disadvantaged learners.
- Similar to mainstreamed vocational classes, vocational teachers in self-contained classrooms seem to have difficulty also in managing the classroom (i.e., classroom management/discipline problems, stress, tension).

Recommendations

- A comprehensive personnel development program should be organized with specific responsibilities centered in the State Department of Education and local school divisions. The local school division, for example, should provide orientation and short-term training to new teachers. As suggested previously, the State Department of Education should provide workshops and coordinate the delivery of graduate/in-service courses by higher education institutions.

- Based upon the competencies identified, as well as those competencies recognized in similar studies, vocational educators should develop a competency-based instructional system for training teachers of disadvantaged students in the skills necessary for teaching academically, economically, socially and culturally disadvantaged students.

- Concern was expressed by experienced teachers in terms of their relationship with fellow colleagues and vocational administrators. Based upon this finding, it is recommended that teachers of disadvantaged students in self-contained classrooms have frequent contact with vocational administrators/supervisors and possibly engage in discussions with their teaching peers via seminars or whatever the appropriate setting may be on teaching and working with disadvantaged learners. This situation would seem to warrant serious consideration of in-service training in the area of special needs for vocational administrators.

- The support system provided by the State Department of Education and local school districts should be improved to maintain the apparently high morale of vocational teachers and to treat several problems identified in this study. Some of these problems were the lack of suitable facilities/equipment, sustaining student motivation, lack of parental involvement, ineffective classroom management, poor attendance/high absenteeism and lack of curriculum materials.

- Additional study is needed concerning the data which revealed a meaningful black-white or racial difference of vocational teachers toward the need for in-service training in the competency areas identified in the study. The differences appeared were large enough to be considered meaningful. The variable "race" should be build into the design of future descriptive studies measuring teaching competencies and in-service problems of teachers working with disadvantaged students in vocational education programs.

- Further research needs to be initiated in identifying problems encountered by vocational teachers in teaching disadvantaged students regardless of the program structure (e.g., self-contained, mainstreamed, etc.) New research efforts should use different approaches including more emphasis on actual classroom observations; the collection of unobtrusive measures; and interaction analysis processes.

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